

WICHITA FALLS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Technical Advisory Committee
Minutes

Wednesday, January 16, 2008

Voting Members Present:

Lin Barnett – Wichita Falls MPO, MPO Director, TAC Chairperson
Danny Brown – TxDOT, Director of Trans. Planning and Development
Dave Clark – City of Wichita Falls, Dir. of Community Development
Davis Powell – City of Wichita Falls, City Engineer
James Kelley – TxDOT, Area Engineer
Karen Montgomery-Gagné – City of Wichita Falls, Comm. Development Planner III
Mark Beauchamp – City of Wichita Falls, Traffic Superintendent
Allan Moore – TxDOT, Director of Construction
Tim Hertel – TxDOT, Director of Operations

MPO Staff:

Tammy Marlow – TxDOT, Funding Administrator
Donnie Arbeau – Wichita Falls MPO, Transportation Planner II

Highway Needs Committee Members:

Visitors:

Jerrie Sowards – Texas State Representative Farabee’s Office from District 69
Jon Möller – Citizen Stakeholder

Absent:

I. Welcome & Introduction

Mr. Barnett called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and welcomed everyone present. Those in attendance introduced themselves.

II. Review and Approval of the October 10th Technical Advisory Committee’s (TAC) Meeting Minutes

Mr. Barnett asked for comments on the October 10th TAC minutes. None were received. Mr. Hertel motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

III. Review and Comment Regarding the Transportation Policy Committee’s (TPC’s) October 24th Meeting Minutes - *No Action Required*

Mr. Barnett asked for comments on the October 24th TPC minutes. None were received. The board moved on to the next item of business.

IV. Discussion of Current and Future Funding of TxDOT Transportation Projects

Mr. Brown began the discussion with the challenges facing TXDOT due to the current funding situation. In the aftermath of HB3588, Category 3 projects (mobility) have been targeted for postponement and significant delays. Factors affecting mobility projects also include inflation and construction costs escalating (62% in the last 5 years and 100% in the last 10 years), while TxDOT revenues have remained relatively unchanged. Maintenance costs on the current system have increased while the State of Texas shifts funding away from transportation (\$1.5 billion). Innovative tools to offset these negative affects have also been put on hold; a moratorium has been placed on toll roads and public private partnerships. As well, rescissions by the federal government in the form of \$660 million to the State of Texas have created uncertainty in Austin and at TxDOT. Therefore, maintenance and rehabilitation projects are now the emphasis and priority moving forward.

Mr. Möller put forth a question concerning how the cutbacks affect the Cross Plains Rural Transportation Council. He noted the support that CPRTC gave to the WFMPO during its push for the Falls Flyover and Kell West. Mr. Brown indicated that TxDOT has been in constant discussions with these representatives and city, county, and state officials, to apprise them of the issues. Mr. Möller felt that support for rural projects should be reciprocated, if the opportunity presents itself. Mr. Brown endorsed this idea and added that local groups (government) should play a more prominent role in prioritizing transportation projects moving forward. He added that funding for rural and urban projects comes from different sets of money.

Mr. Brown touched on various projects that could be affected by the funding shortage. Phase I and Phase II of the US 82 to Nocona project has been delayed. Kell West is proceeding on schedule. Loop 11 is safe and the project has been let for construction. Funding for it comes from Category 11 – Discretionary Funding. Ms. Montgomery-Gagné inquired about enhancement projects and what the future holds for the program. The program is currently on hold. Mr. Powell inquired about the future for safety projects. They have been affected, but the deadlines for allocating funding for safety has been suspended. Mr. Brown finished his comments by stating that preserving the public's investment in the current system is the number 1 priority at TxDOT. As a final comment by Mr. Brown, the Districts' pavement scores in the PMIS are very good, and as a result, some maintenance funding will be shifted to Districts with lower roadway scores.

V. Review and Recommendation of February 2008 TIP Revisions to the 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Including SAFETEA-LU Year of Expenditure Requirements

Mr. Barnett presented the proposed February 2008 TIP Revisions to the committee. FHWA provided a new SAFETEA-LU checklist to the WFMPO which was added to the document along with comments stating how each point was addressed. Under Federally Funded Highway Projects, TX39 and TX 20 (FM 890) projects have moved to 2012 and been removed from the document. These 2 projects also need to be deleted from the project map before the TPC meeting. In the remarks section a few items have been added: year of expenditure, total project cost construction, PE, ROW, CE, bond finance, contingencies, and indirect. The MPO has access to DCIS and can now produce these numbers to keep the TIP updated.

Continuing on, Mr. Barnett stated that Grouped CSJ projects (maintenance and rehabilitation) were moved to Appendix A of the document. Ms. Marlow added the point that projects in

Grouped CSJ are now shown as “financially constrained” as opposed to detailing exact costs for projects in the main part of the document. Touching on this issue, Mr. Möller asked for clarification on the benefits of this change and how citizens can review TxDOT and District funding allocations for maintenance projects. In response Mr. Brown stated that the change gives the District office more flexibility in managing maintenance projects and that the STIP (Statewide Transportation Improvement Program) provides an accurate accounting of all maintenance projects for the public’s review.

Mr. Barnett asked for additional comments on the February 2008 TIP Revisions to the 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Including SAFETEA-LU Year of Expenditure Requirements. None were received. Mr. Clark made a motion to forward the document to TPC, with noted revisions, for their review and approval. Mr. Kelley seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

VI. Review and Recommendation of the 2007 MPO Surface Transportation Projects Environmental Justice Analysis Final Report

Mr. Barnett surmised the process of updating the 2007 final report. Eight new City projects and two stakeholder projects were added to the report. Mr. Clark commented that the Maplewood Extension project was approved by City Council on January 15th, 2008, and a meeting to discuss the Rhea/Callfield/Lawrence intersection has moved the project closer to a determining point, in terms of what entity will drive the redevelopment. Mr. Barnett indicated that notes for each would be updated to reflect these changes in the document.

Continuing on, Mr. Möller asked for an explanation on language detailing the mitigating circumstances or negative affects of EJ-15, EJ-16, and WF-14. Mr. Brown and Mr. Barnett clarified the intent of EJ Analysis and the requirement to detail adverse impacts along with foreseeable benefits. The negative impacts are deemed temporary regards to the projects in question. The clarification was met with satisfaction by the citizen stakeholder in attendance.¹

Mr. Barnett asked for additional comments on the 2007 MPO Surface Transportation Projects Environmental Justice Analysis Final Report. None were received. Mr. Beauchamp made a motion to forward the document, with revisions, to TPC for their review and adoption. Mr. Powell seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

VII. Review and Discussion of the 2007 Annual Performance and Expenditure Report Including the 2007 Annual List of Projects Completed

Discussion began with Mr. Barnett outlining the purpose of the APER. The report recaps the accomplishments of the WFMPO along with supporting financial information. The final document was forwarded to TP&P in Austin at the end of December 2007. It is developed on a yearly basis. Mr. Brown added the point that roll-over Federal funding for MPO planning may be dissolved. TxDOT has not been notified of this development, but it is a possibility.

¹ In a later meeting with TxDOT and City TAC board members, it was determined that additional language should be added, where necessary, to point out that the negative effects of the project would be short-term and temporary during construction activities. A description of the long-term benefits of the project would also be provided.

VIII. Other Business:

A. Discussion & Overview of Progress on Local Transportation Projects – City and TxDOT staff (Quarterly Review)

City Report: Mr. Powell reported the Maplewood Phase II project has been let for construction (Jan. 15th, 2008). The Kell West Extension - Utility Relocation Project was awarded on Jan 15th, 2008, to handle the water and sewer lines relocation for the extension of the Kell main lanes. Scheduled projects for the remainder of the year include: Street Rehab Program at various locations around the City (letting date is Feb. 5th, 2008); new entrance road for the Transfer Station on Maplewood Ave. across from Wal-Mart; traffic flow improvements are scheduled for Feb. 19th at designated areas (Kemp/Callfield, Maplewood/Elmwood, Elmwood/Southwest, 10th/Harrison); alley rehab at various locations across the City; Greg Rd. and Langford Lane will be widened.

TxDOT Report: Mr. Kelley reported that work to correct the Falls Flyover ramp that connects US 281 with US 82 continues to progress. There are 2 utilities that need to be moved on the Loop 11 project, which should commence by March 1st. Actual construction should begin late February or mid March. Work is ongoing on mitigating issues with utilities on the Kell West project. The IH 44 concrete paving project is delayed and the contractor is absorbing liquidated damages. The project will continue in two weeks or more. Work on the southbound lanes of IH 44 is anticipated for 2011, in 3 years. The erosion control project for US 82 is completed.

B. MPO Quarterly Financial Report (4th Quarter FY 2007 – July, August, September)

Mr. Barnett reported that the final quarterly report for FY 2007 showed the WFMPPO spent 73.88% of allocated funding. He asked for comments and questions on the quarterly report. There were none.

C. Update of Wichita Falls Transit System - Progress Report

Mr. Barnett notified the TAC members that on Feb 8th the City Manager will be presented with the current Transit System proposal updates. On Feb 19th, Mr. Barnett will make the official kick-off announcement at City Council. At that time dates will be announced for the public participation forum from Feb 25th to March 1st at Sikes Senter Mall, just inside the doors nearest to the transfer point. A number of public hearings will also be held, dates to be determined.

Comments from the public forum and hearings will be categorized and a report will be developed from that. On March 18th, the final presentation will be made for acceptance. The target date for implementation is July 7th. Transit is closed on July 4th and only the Sheppard Express will run on July 5th and 6th. This route will remain unchanged. Logistics, route books, maps, route signs, and so forth will take approximately 3 months to complete during this time. The FTA required Triennial Review will also take place during 2008.

D. Stakeholder Presentation Notification – Urban Area Neighborhood District Option

Mr. Barnett stated the WFMPO has worked with Mr. Moller to provide him the information needed to develop his draft proposal for what Mr. Moller is calling the "Urban Area Neighborhood District Option". Three maps have been completed to accompany the proposal. Mr. Moller stated he has been trying to meet informally with the Mayor and the County Judge to gain their opinion of his concept. Mr. Barnett stated that a full presentation of the UAND Option proposal would be made in April to the TAC committee.

Mr. Moller expressed his appreciation to the MPO and the Director of Aviation, Traffic, and Transportation, Mr. Burrus, for providing him with the information and technical support to develop his proposal. Mr. Moller stated that the UAND Option is a project he has been developing since 1996. He identified TAZ 72 and the Environmental Justice Target Areas that surround the Falls Flyover as the key district in the UAND Option. Given the pending completion of the interchange, Mr. Moller felt the benefit to the surrounding neighborhood needed to be validated before going any further with the concept.

The UAND program is the tool that Mr. Moller feels could be used to achieve specific goals. The UAND Option and TAZ 72 would be considered a zone of special treatment, if stakeholders were willing to participate in the program. Mr. Moller stated it would essentially try to help stakeholders in this area present their property in the best way possible to attract potential investors and developers. The value of existing properties has readily declined over time. Mr. Moller has identified a group of stakeholders that are familiar with his concept and are prepared to work with local County and City officials to accomplish these goals. Mr. Moller felt the MPO could provide good demographic and socioeconomic data for such a purpose.

Overall, Mr. Moller felt the UAND Option would provide tools to get stakeholders involved and improve their situation working in the universe of redevelopment. From a business perspective, he felt it was safe to present his proposal to the MPO first to gauge the viability of such a concept. Mr. Moller then offered a cashier's check for \$2,500 to the WFMPO "as a token of my willingness to bring funds to the table, for the MPO to scrutinize things in a way that really does apply to particular things that have little funding behind them." He offered the check to Mr. Barnett. Mr. Barnett did not accept the check.

Mr. Brown asked for more clarification on what Mr. Moller was asking of the WFMPO. Mr. Moller stated that by utilizing the upcoming Socioeconomic Data Collection and Forecast Study Update, TAZ 72 could be investigated much deeper. He commented that the key is to identify the demographics and any pockets of poverty. He stated that the analysis could reveal stakeholders willing to work together to improve their socioeconomic status. He stated that the area around the Falls Flyover is declining and that there are tools the political leadership could use to help revitalize this portion of the City. Mr. Moller commented that he would like to have the opportunity to see if his proposal will work here in Wichita Falls, and that if it does, then maybe it can work in other MPO's around the state and across the nation as well.

Mr. Barnett stated the MPO was not in the business to help stakeholders sell their property, only to provide them with any information available that they might need to develop their own proposals. Mr. Barnett stated that MPO staff is always willing to provide mapping expertise, technical advice and suggestions on document preparation

to any and all citizens, stakeholders, investors and developers that contact the MPO office.

Ms. Montgomery-Gagné asked how many property holders as stakeholders were on board with Mr. Moller's initiative. He replied that 13 stakeholders were in agreement. To finish off the discussions, the TAC agreed with Mr. Barnett not to accept the check from Mr. Moller. There were no further comments.

IX. Public Comment on Anything Not on the Agenda

Ms. Sowards expressed her appreciation to the City of Wichita Falls and TxDOT, specifically in regards to transportation, platting, and overall cleanliness. The TAC expressed their gratitude for her kind words. Then Mr. Clark touched on the work being done to develop the Overall Comprehensive Plan which has several elements which include the Defense Diversification Plan, Downtown Planning, and individual areas that City Council was interested. All of the City Council adopted plans will be referenced in one document. The Executive Summary of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2005-2030 will be included.

Mr. Brown touched on the Statewide MPO audit. Correspondence was sent from Austin that some study offices have not been doing an adequate job of monitoring of expenditures. The District office is committed to ensuring this is addressed.

XII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 noon.

Irvan F. "Lin" Barnett Jr.
MPO Transportation Planning Director
Wichita Falls MPO